

Dear Prospective Host Family:

Rotary International Youth Exchange ("RYE") provides the opportunity for young people to be Youth Ambassadors around the world. Our program connects exchange students from all over the world with volunteer host families and gives them the opportunity of a lifetime to experience a new culture, enhance their language skills, make lasting relationships, and ultimately return to their home countries with a positive impression of life in the U.S.A. In return, these students make a life-changing impact on all who encounter them and most of all on their host families. Many host families report that their family got as much or more out of hosting than being the host. To make this experience possible, we need and rely on host families who, with the support of the local Rotary Clubs, are willing to open their home and their hearts to these students.

The purpose of this letter is to give you some information about the program and to hopefully encourage you take the next step and become a host family for one of these amazing students.

Benefits of Hosting:

By hosting an exchange student from another part of the world, you help Rotary's mission of promoting friendship, understanding, and world peace. You are giving these brave students the gift of experiencing a new culture and way of life while feeling safe, supported, and a part of a loving family – something you would hope others would do for your own child.

These exchanges allow us to better understand our differences and appreciate our similarities – a lesson that can best be learned through cultural exchange. We can all agree that our children are our future. By volunteering to host, you can play a crucial part in raising the foreign students and your own children, through exposure to the program, to be strong, brave, adaptive, curious, open-minded, and kind individuals.

An exchange student brings the world to your family and community! Hosting allows you to experience – up close and personal – different cultures, languages, customs, and all the excitement that comes along with it. You will try new foods, learn new words, see new places, and create lifelong relationships with people with whom you otherwise might never have crossed paths. Even better, you will learn how build relationships with those who are different from you and deepen your ability to connect, communicate, and collaborate with others.

Experiencing your daily life from the fresh perspective of an exchange student can bring new energy and excitement to things you probably take for granted. Restaurants, movie nights, shopping trips, and even housework become adventures when experienced through the eyes of your new family member.

But perhaps the greatest benefit of a cultural exchange is the network of lifelong friends around the world. Students keep in touch with their host families for years after their program ends. Host families often travel to their student's home country to visit, experience their culture firsthand, and meet their families. By welcoming a student into your home, you open the door to an exciting new world of relationships and experiences for your children and family.

Eligibility:

You do not have to be a Rotary member to host a RYE student. All that is required is the desire to make a positive impact in a child's life and a willingness to treat him or her as a member of your

own family. Families with children (even young children), families without children, empty nesters, and single individuals have all had successful hosting experiences.

Rotary Support:

Rotary will provide background and reference checks, training, and support for your hosting experience. Rotary will also provide the student with comprehensive insurance, training, and a monthly stipend (the students typically have their own spending money as well). Rotary will also keep in regular contact with you and the student to ensure that everyone is having a good experience.

Keep in mind that Rotarians are often eager to take your student out for meals, trips, and entertainment. Rotarians are also happy to assist with transportation to special RYE or school events and any other tasks with which the family needs help. It takes a village, after all!

Hosting Requirements:

Typically, a student lives with a host family for approximately three months during a normal school year. As a host family, you are expected to:

- Treat your student like a family member, not a guest (the student should have the same privileges and obligations as your own children).
- Exercise supervisory and parental responsibility to ensure the student's well-being.
- Make sure the student attends school and provide a quiet place in the home where the student can study.
- Provide a room with an exit window, bed, and storage with no more than one roommate of the same sex.
- Provide three meals per day (or lunch money for school) and other necessities that are incidental to daily life (shampoo, soap, etc.).
- Cooperate with the RYE Program by adhering to program calendar, regulations, guidelines, and policies (regular progress reports, home visits, etc.)
- Acknowledge the student's birthday and other special occasions.
- Ensure the student knows how to contact family members, friends, and other support networks.
- Provide love, support, and guidance.
- Follow all Rotary rules and safety protocols regarding youth exchange.

You are not required to plan special trips, vacations, or entertainment for your exchange student. However, including your student in normal family trips, outings, gatherings, etc. has proven to enhance the hosting experience.

Ready to take the next step?

If you decide that you are ready to become a host family, please reach out to us at the contact information below or reach out to your local Rotary club.

Britt Etheredge

Cell: 830-708-8907

Email: britt.etheredge@caliberhomeloans.com

Lilia Marek

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Once we hear from you, we will provide you with a Host Family Application and walk you through the next steps. We look forward to hearing from you and answering any questions you may have.

Very truly yours,

Britt Etheredge and Lilia S. Marek
Co-Chairs for RYE District 5840